

Education in Jackson County, Alabama

Before the Civil War

There are a few records that address education in Jackson County before the Civil War.

John R. Kennamer's Background on Education in Jackson County

The early settlers of Jackson without some means of education, for the grant of the sixteenth section in each township for local schools afforded a small foundation upon which to build.

The results were for many years not very satisfactory or what one might have expected. The gift of this sixteenth section was to the township and not to the State, and if the section was fertile and would sell or rent for a high price, the schools located in that township received sufficient funds to run a free school a few months. On the other hand, if the sixteenth section happened to be located on lands which were rough, ridge or poor soil, then the income was quite small, and the zeal for education of the people was not enough to make up a sufficient fund for schools. There were here, as in other parts of the State, two classes of settlers; the more wealthier planter, who lived in the valleys, and the poorer mountaineer. This latter class had neither time nor facilities for education. Their social advantages were nil, and their interest in education was not much better than their social condition. Life was one continuous burden of hardships, want, and toil.

Early in the history of the State, a law was enacted to provide for the election of three trustees in each township, whose duties were similar tho those of a much later date. The County Judge, with the trustees, handled the school funds and paid the teachers. The State school system was not established until 1854.

In February 1856, an Act was passed creating the office of county superintendent of education. This was a change of vital importance to the school and was an epoch in the history of education. The State had begun two years previously to appropriate money to supplement the sixteenth section funds. The appropriation was \$100,000 for the whole state.

In early times, the school teacher was usually a crippled man, who was not able to do manual labor, a man who had some eccentric disposition, with a limited ability to figure, and could read and write a little, yet one who could use the "rod of correction" briskly. He came into a community to make up a school, and after seeing a few of the leaders, would announce that a school would open next Monday in the little neighborhood church house. The school day began just after sunup and last until near the setting of the same. His rules were strict, his word was law, and harsh discipline was his chief aim of success. He boarded among his pupils as that was part of his pay. He also took furs, skins, and a little money for his work.

In the village or small town, the teacher was better qualified and the course of student was enlarged to include grammar, elocution and a little Latin. Later, ladies began to teach and music became part of the course of study.

In the prosperous days of slavery, before the Civil War, when all manual labor was done by negro slaves, the sons and daughters of planers were educated in the Arts and Classics. After finishing the academic course here, they went to some college or university to complete their education, before taking up law, medicine or politics as a profession in life. This condition existed when the great and terrible Civil war began, which stopped all efforts to instruct the young in schools, as quickly as vanishes the mist before the rising sun. Many persons born in fifties and sixties were deprived of any education except that received in the school of "hard-knocks," hard work and self-denial.

Wendell Page's One Hundred School Document

These statements about information found in early Jackson County documents comes from Wendell Page and his school research.

At the time of the public land sales, beginning in Jackson County in 1830, the county governing body, Commissioner's Court of Roads and Revenue, became responsible for the establishment of a free public school in each township. The income generated by this township had to be spent within the producing township.

The township-range system was a part of the Land Ordinance of 1786 enacted by the Second Continental Congress. The purpose was to provide a system where settler could own property in the Northwest Territory, or Ohio Country, of the new nation. The system worked well in the Ohio Country, as evidenced by the excellent of this area's educational institutions.

The Minutes of the Fall Term 1857 reveal that James Cox was paid \$325.00 for services as superintendent of education beginning May 1856 through May 1857 (Road Book 3, page 179). On December 23, 1857, the court directed the county treasurer to pay Mr. Cox the sum of \$291.00 for services rendered. On May 6, 1860, the court approved payment of \$400.00 in compensation for services from February 11859 to 1860 (Road Book 3, page 210).

The Stevenson Story

Eliza Woodall has more to say about the state of education in the Stevenson area before the Civil War:

Names and locations of school in pre-Civil War days in the Stevenson area are as scarce as hen's teeth. T. Boyd Foster wrote in his memoirs that he came to Alabama from Franklin Couty, Tennessee, and taught one term at Bolivar in 1834. In 1978, "one term" meant twenty weeks; it is not known what it meant in 1834. By 1840 Foster was teaching at Pleasant Grove in Crow Creek Valley. He then taught several terms on up the Valley in Tennessee before moving to Sand Mountain where he taught five terms at Monday's Chapel. And therein lies a clue about the names of the early school; many times church buildings were used during the week for school.

The 1850 census lists two school teachers near the future site of Stevenson: John Shirley, living between Joel Wimberley and Robert H. Price (Shirley could well have been the teacher at Ryan Academy; see below); and John Hall, living next door to the widow of Col. Charles Maclin Cross.

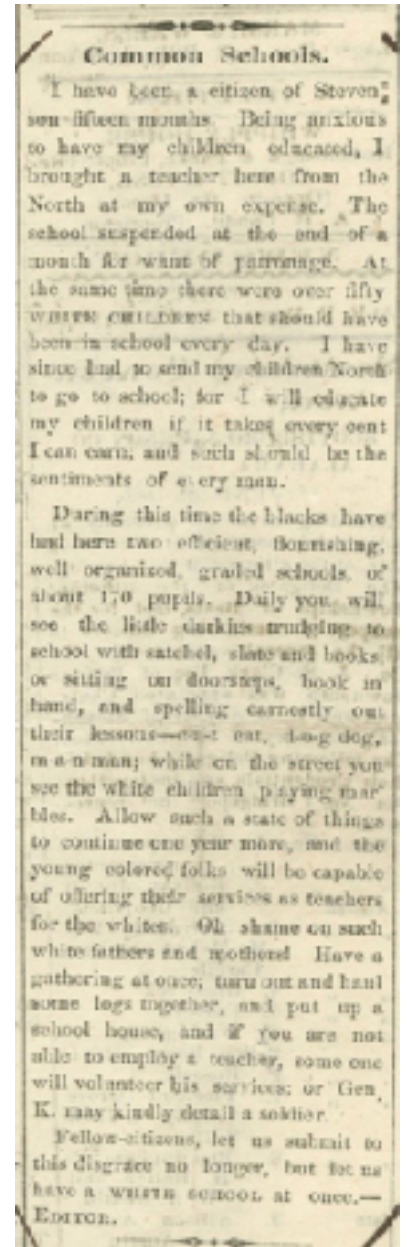
Elder Joh A. Cargile, born in 1843, wrote about attending a school taught by Presley G. Griffin at Collins Springs (in the Crow Creek Valley about 200 yard up the road from Cam Crabtree's house). Others who attended school were "the Tally boys, the McMahan boys, the Jacoway boys, and my cousins." The Tally boys would have been W. J., John B. Jr., Matthew and Cam H, brothers, who were the sons of John B. Tally. Houston, William J., Jacob, and Jerry McMahan were brothers, the sons of William McMahan. The Jacoway boys would have been Ben and Crocker, son of William U. Jacoway. John A's cousins would have been Charley and Will Cargile, sons of Pleasant; Kern, Amos, and John Cargile, sons of Jesse Cargile; and Daniel, Sanders, and Finley Hughes, sons of Joshua Hughes.

On the 1860 census Richard Eulerick is list as a teacher; he was living between two Cargile families on Crow Creek. Richard had married Margaret Busby, a daughter of Thomas and Ruhana Busby. The Mrs. Ruhanan Busbym after the death of her husband, married Alexander Vinson. Window again by his death, she married Lewis Cargile in 1856, a few years after his first wife died, It is presumed that Richard Eulerick was teaching at the Collins Spring School, which was nearby. Mrs. Lillie Ridley, remembered for the legacy of books left by the Eulerick family as being the greatest number of volumes that she ever saw in one home in the Stevenson community,

Bolivar, Pleasant Grove, Monday's Chapel, Collins Spring, and whatever schools were taught by John Shirley and John Hall were the only references that have surfaced concerning pre-War schools.

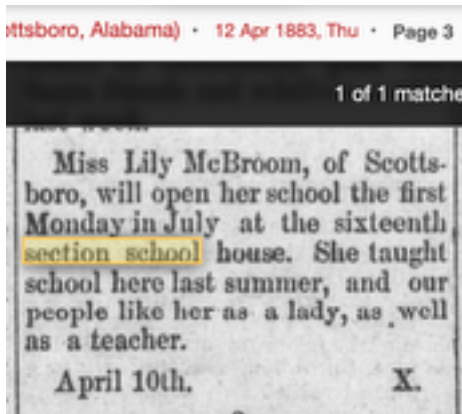
Schools During Reconstruction

This is from the Jackson County News, only one issue of which can be found in a database at Duke. Blake found it. Dated June 10, 1865.



Schools After the Civil War

From the Scottsboro Citizen



It is interesting to note that schools were not on a consist schedule. This PA summary of the February 1927 (Feb 17) county school board meeting shows schools meeting at different times.

Doing of The County Board of Education

The Board of Education was called together Monday, Feb. 11th, to formulate its policies for the distribution of the funds that the Legislature donated to Jackson County recently for educational purposes.

The Counties and School Districts that now have seven months school will receive none of this donation.

It was the concurrent opinion of the Board that it would not be satisfactory to have schools in the rural districts in Jackson county during the months of May and June.

The schools that opened the first of October will be continued to a seven months term and the teachers' contract extended to cover that time.

The schools that opened the last of October and the first of November will be given a split session or a vacation during the months of May and June, and the balance of the seven months being finished in July and August.

For those that opened the middle of October and the first of November the Superintendent was instructed to confer with the teachers and trustees of the district and decide whether the school would be extended into the first weeks of May, or given a split session, whichever was the most favorable after a thorough investigation.

The Commissioners Court was asked to order an election in the Apple school district and the Dean school district for the purpose of levying a special three mill district tax.

The proposition of employing a Supervisor for the county schools for the next three months was insisted on by some members of the Board but was passed over to the next meeting.

Caldwell and Wheeler were appointed a committee to have the class of the Scottsboro City school that is now located and being taught in a room on the second floor in a dwelling town removed at once.

The Superintendent was instructed to employ an attorney to take care of the County's interest in a claim filed against the Board of Education for the balance of material furnished for the Linrack school building.

Meeting adjourned to meet again February 15th.